

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 GUATEM 03590 01 OF 02 261912Z

53

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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R 261815Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0385

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GUATEMALA 3590

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: PUBLICATION OF SANDOVAL MEMO AROUSES CONTROVERSY

REF: (1) GUATEMALA 5613 (1972) (2) GUATEMALA 0162

1. SUMMARY LA HORA PUBLISHER MARROQUIN ROJAS STIREED CONTROVERSY WITH PUBLICATION JULY 20 OF "CONFIDENTIAL" SANDOVAL MEMO. THE MEMO IS A BRUTALLY FRANK DESCRIPTION OF POLITICAL SCENT MADE IN LATE 1972. SANDOVAL ADMITS AUTHENTICITY. POLITICIANS HAVE BEEN TRADING ACCUSATIONS BASED ON REVELATIONS. INCIDENT'S LONG-TERM IMPACT WILL DEPEND UPON EFFECT IT HAS ON GOVERNMENT COALITION. END SUMMARY.

2. CLEMENTE MARROQUIN ROJAS HEATED UP POLITICAL SCENE ON JULY 20 WITH PUBLICATION OF "CONFIDENTIAL" MEMORANDUM PREPARED BY NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT (MLN) LEADER MARIO SANDOVAL ALARCON IN LATE 1972. THE MEMO, "A GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE POLITICAL SCENT," WAS PREPARED AT MARROQUIN'S REQUEST WHEN MARROQUIN WAS STILL MLN PRESIDENTIAL PRECANDIDATE (SEE REF 1). THE MEMO IS A BRUTALLY FRANK EXPOSITION OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF POLITICALLY PROMINENT INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS.

3. IN DISCUSSION OF THE "GENERAL SITUATION" SANDOVAL NOTES THAT THE CONSTITUTION'S PROHIBITION AGAINST REELECTION HAS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 GUATEM 03590 01 OF 02 261912Z

RESULTED IN (1) SHORT-TERM, INEFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

(2) EXCESSIVE ELECTORAL ACTIVITY AND AMBITION, MANIFESTED IN THE PROLIFERATION OF COMMITTEES FOR THE FORMATION OF PARTIES. SANDOVAL CLAIMS THAT HE HAD SUCCEEDED IN CONVINCING PRESIDENT ARANA OF THE NEED FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE, INCLUDING EXTENSION OF FUTURE PRESIDENTIAL TERMS TO SIX YEARS, BUT THE PLAN COULD NOT BE CARRIED OUT BECAUSE OF ITS "BAD PRESS".

4. SANDOVAL THEN PRESENTS HIS CRITIQUE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES: THE MLN PRESENTS "NO PROBLEMS," BUT THE COALITION PACT WITH THE PID REQUIRED PARITY WITH A PARTY THAT "WASN'T WORK A CENT." THE PID IS BUILT UPON SOLID, ANTI-COMMUNIST BASE, BUT SUFFERS FROM BAD LEADERSHIP OF OPPORTUNISTIC ELEMENTS. IN SPITE OF THE PID'S PROBLEMS, SANDOVAL STRESSES THE NEED TO MAINTAIN THE COALITION AT ALL COSTS.

5. RE PR, SANDOVAL CLAIMS GOOD RELATIONS WITH BOTH FACTIONS AND CLAIMS TO HAVE PROMOTED SAGASTUME'S LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY. HE ADDS THAT SAGASTUME'S PRESIDENTIAL AMBITION MAKES COALITION WITH HIM IMPOSSIBLE. RE PNR, SANDOVAL FORESEES POSSIBILITY FOR AN "UNDERSTANDING", BECAUSE OF HIS "GOOD RELATIONSHIP" WITH PATNOJA. SANDOVAL CONCLUDES THAT EVEN A UNITED PR REPRESENTS NO CHALLENGE FOR THE NEXT TWO PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS BECAUSE OF ITS INTERNAL CLEAVAGES AND RECORD OF POOR PERFORMANCE IN OFFICE.

6. RE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, SANDOVAL DECLARES THAT HE ALWAYS HAS PROMOTED DIVISION IN DCG BY ENCOURAGING THE LUQUISTAS AND BY CREATING THE BREAK BETWEEN THE FACTIONS OF DE LEON SCHLOTTER AND HEHLERT MATA. SANDOVAL FORESEES POSSIBILITY OF SOME "AGREEMENT" WITH GEHLERT, WHOM HE DESCRIBES IN FAVORABLE TERMS. HE VIEWS DE LEON AS "THE IDEAL CANDIDATE FOR THE GOVERNMENT," BECAUSE OF HIS PERSONAL DEFICIENCIES: "IGNORANT, NOT VERY INTELLIGENT, FATUOUS AND ABOVE ALL COWARDLY."

7. RE REGISTRATION OF NEW PARTIES, SANDOVAL DECLARES THAT HIGH LEVEL GOVERNMENT LEADERS, INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT, HAD DECIDED NOT TO PERMIT GUATEMALA MAYOR COLOM ARGUETA'S FURD TO SEEK LEGAL REGISTRATION, BUT SANDOVAL CHANGED THEIR MINDS WITH THE FOLLOWING ARGUMENTS: (1) IT WOULD ALLOW GOVERNMENT TO GAUGE DEGREE OF COLOM'S POWER (2) FOMENT DIVISION AMONG THE LEFT (3) CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 GUATEM 03590 01 OF 02 261912Z

MAKE THE FURD WAST MONEY AND, (4) IF THE FURD GAINS 50,000 SIGNATURES , THE ELECTORAL REGISTRY CAN PERMANENTLY BLOCK ITS INSCRIPTION. COMMENTING ON OTHER INCIPIENT POLITICAL PARTIES, SANDOVAL PREDICTS THAT THE FDG, HEADED BY MARROQUIN'S DAUGHTER, WILL BE UNABLE TO ESTABLISH ITSELF AS A POLITICAL PARTY BUT CAN REMAIN AS A CIVIC ASSOCIATION ASSOCIATED WITH THE COALITION.

8. SANDOVAL DEPRECATES THE CENTRAL ARANISTA ORGANIZADA HEADED BY THE PRESIDENT'S SON ROBERTO, WHICH IN ATTEMPT TO TRANSFORM ITSELF INTO A POLITICAL PARTY HAS RESORTED TO FIRING COALITION-AFFILIATED GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO REFUSED TO JOIN ITS RANKS.

9. IN A CRITIQUE OF HIGH-RANKING GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS SANDOVAL DENIGRRATES PID MINISTERS AND PRAISES THE MLN'S WITH THE EXCEPTION OF EDUCATION MINISTER MALDONADO, DESCRIBED AS BRILLIANT BUT TIMID. THE MOST EMBARRASSING OF SANDOVAL'S COMMENTS CONCERN TRINIDAD UCLES, PID LEADER AND MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE, WHO IS ACCUSED OF HAVING PUT HIS HAND IN THE TILL. KJELL LAUGERUD, THEN THE DEFENSE MINISTER, IS PRAISED AS "MUCH BETTER THAN HIS PREDECESSOR, AND WOTHY OF ARANA'S GREAT CONFIDENCE. SANDOVAL ALSO WAS CAREFUL TO SPEAK WILL OF THE PRESIDENT, WHOM HE NOTES POSSESSES "MUCH MORE, BUT MUCH MORE POLITICAL SENSE AND SENSITIVITY THAN BEFORE."

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 GUATEM 03590 02 OF 02 261916Z

53

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NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0386

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GUATEMALA 3590

10. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE MEMO, RUDY FUENTES SANDOVAL, MLN PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR, ISSUED A PRESS RELEASE DENYING THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE DOCUMENT AND DECLARING THE PARTY'S INTENTION TO TAKE MARROQUIN TO COURT. LA NACION QUOTED SANDOVAL AS ADMITTING HE HAD GIVEN A MEMO TO MARROQUIN IN DECEMBER BUT CLAIMING THAT THE PUBLISHED DOCUMENT WAS "ALTERED". IN A MEETING WITH THE PRESS JULY 23 SANDOVAL FINALLY ADMITTED

THAT THE DOCUMENT WAS AUTHENTIC AS PRINTED AND DECLARED HE HAD NO INTENTION TO RETRACT IT. THE MLN LEADER EXPLAINED THAT THE MEMO HAD BEEN REQUESTED BY MARROQUIN, WHO BECAUSE OF ILLNESS HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO FOLLOW CURRENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS. SANDOVAL CLAIMED THAT A FEW DAYS BEFORE PUBLICATION OF THE MEMO HE HAD BEEN APPROACHED TO INTERVENE WITH THE ELECTORAL REGISTRY ON BEHALF OF THE FDG AND HAD REFUSED. HE INTERPRETED THE REQUEST AS A BLACKMAIL THREAT AND WARNED ARANA THAT THE DOCUMENT WOULD BE PUBLISHED.

11. SANDOVAL STATED THAT HE CONSIDERED THE SUBJECT CLOSED, BUT MOST OTHER POLITICIANS VIEW THE INCIDENT AS A MAJOR POLITICAL BOMBSHELL. INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS MENTIONED IN THE MEMO HAVE BEEN HEATEDLY TRADING ACCUSATIONS. DCG SECRETARY-GENERAL DANILO BARRILLAS HAS SAID THE DOCUMENT CONFIRMS THAT PARTTY DISSIDENTS HAVE MADE DEALS WITH THE GOVERNMENT TO DIVIDE THE PARTY. GEHLERT'S DCG DISSIDENTS SAY THE COCUMENT CONFIRMS THAT DE LEON'S CANDIDACY IS CONVENIENT FOR THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 GUATEM 03590 02 OF 02 261916Z

GOVERNMENT. THE LUQISTAS DECLARE THAT THE MEMO SHOWS THEIR HANDS ARE CLEAN. THE FURD CALLED THE MEMO PROOF THAT THE GOG WAS ILLEGALLY BLOCKING THEIR INSCRIPTION LAUGERUD REAFFIRMED THE UNITY OF THE COALITION IN A SPEECH JULY 22 AND SAID THE COALITON WOULD NOT PERMIT ITS ADVERSARIES TO DRIVE WEDGES BETWEEN ITS RANKS. PID LEADERS WAITED UNTIL JULY 25 TO ISSUE STATEMENT WHICH CONDEMNED MEMO AND CLASSIFIED IT AS LIBELOUS, BUT WHICH AVOIDED ATTACKING SANDOVAL BY NAME. PID STATEMENT REITERATED SUPPLRT FOR LAUGERUD AND ECHOED HIS STATEMENT RE NECESSITY FOR MAINTAINING UNITY AGAINST "DIVISIONIST MANEUVERS."

12. COMMENT: THE LONG-TERM POLITICAL IMPACT OF THE MEMO WILL DEPEND LARGELY UPON THE EFFECT IT HAS ON THE GOVERNMENT COALITION. IF THE GOVERNMENT COALITION MEMBERS DECIDE TO FORGIVE AND FORGET, IT WILL HAVE LITTLE LASTING IMPORT. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY ALLOW THE MEMO TO REMAIN A CONTINUING SOURCE OF IRRITATION, THEN THE LAUGERUD CAMPAIGN WILL SUFFER, BUT PROBABLY NOT TO THE EXTENT OF LOSING THE ELECTION. ONE INTERESTING POSSIBILITY IS THAT LAUGERUD AND PRESIDENT ARANA MIGHT USE THE MEMO AS A BASIS FOR TRYING TO FORCE SANDOVAL, WHO IS CONSIDERED BY MANY TO BE A LOADSTONE AROUND LAUGERUD'S NECK, TO RESIGN IN FAVOR OF ANOTHER MLN CANDIDATE. WE DOUBT THAT ARANA WOULD DO THIS PRIMARILY BACAUSE HE COULD NOT DO SO WITHOUT COMPLETELY ALIENATING SANDOVAL.

13. WE HAVE HEARD THAT THE GOG HAS CONSIDERED THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A STATE OF SIEGE TO PUT A MORATORIUM ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY UNTIL THE INCIDENT BLOWS OVER, BUT WE

DOUBT THAT SUCH A PLAN WOULD BE PUT INTO EFFECT AT THIS
JUNCTURE.

14. ALTHOUGH SOME OPPOSITION LEADERS HAVE EXPRESSED HOPE THAT
THE DOCUMENT WILL SERVE AS BASIS FOR UNITING OPPOSITION.
POSSIBLY AROUND CANDIDACY OF FORMER CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT
(1963-66) COL. ENRIQUE PERALTA, THE MEMO APPEARS TO US TO HAVE
FANNED THE OPPOSITION'S MUTUAL RECRIMINATIONS RATHER THAN
TO HAVE ENCOURAGED UNITY.
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